

# MOVING PICTURES



Celeste Talbert (Sally Field) gets carried away by Montanna Moorehead (Cathy Moriarty) and Rose Schwartz (Whoopi Goldberg) in "Soapdish."

## Too many stars spoil the plot of 'Soapdish'

The rush-to-premiere films for Memorial Day weekend has passed and only one new film is on this week's docket, "Soapdish" (B-, PG-13, 95 minutes).

As all sorts of "real life" intrigue unfolds during filming of "The Sun Also Shines," the film's fictitious soap opera, the program's scriptwriter, Rose Schwartz (Whoopi Goldberg), wonders aloud, "Why can't I write stuff like this?"

The answer, of course, as the movie proves, is that the offstage lives of actors are much more interesting than the unbelievable storylines of their show.

Multiple plots revolve around the set of the daytime drama whose ratings are falling. Driven by pressure from network execs and lust for supporting actress Montana Moorehead (Cathy Moriarty), producer David Barnes (Robert Downey Jr.) takes drastic action.

Moorehead wants him to axe the reigning "queen of misery," the show's star, Celeste Talbert (Sally Field), in order to further her own career. Barnes sees this as a way to boost ratings, but every time he plots to write Celeste out of the show, something foils his plans, whether it is the effects of returning her ex-lover, Jeffrey Anderson (Kevin Kline), to the show or the rise to fame of her niece, Lori Craven (Elizabeth Shue), an extra on the set.

**SOUND CONFUSING:** That's only the beginning — proving that the phony "real life" of these actors can be more surprising than television soaps ever imagined, and twice as contrived.

There are other sub-plots in both the movie and the soap, and some even manage to surprise the audience. The climactic scene is a live broadcast of the soap opera, which disintegrates into an ad-libbed reconciliation of both the characters and the actors.

This, and other scenes, leave the audience wondering where the acting ends and the real life drama begins. Some scenes also demonstrate that actors can give more convincing performances off-camera than on, given the proper motivations.

Unfortunately, just as in the daytime soaps, "Soapdish" sports far too many stars for one movie. Potentially excellent performances from Whoopi Goldberg and Carrie Fisher are buried in the proliferation of stars and plots.

The movie begins in the middle and, while this creates the feeling that we are actually watching a soap opera that began long before we tuned in, it also makes it difficult to sort out who's who for the first 20 minutes.

Add an abrupt and sappy ending, and you have either a confusing mess of a movie, or an interesting statement about TV and how it figures into the daily lives of both the viewers and the actors. Sadly, the film's full potential is lost amid the hubbub of the happy Hollywood ending.

### STILL PLAYING:

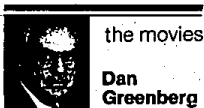
"Backdraft" (C, R, 136 minutes). Disappointing, cornball, clichéd story of two brothers, both Chicago firefighters.

"Class Action" (C+, R, 100 minutes).

Father-daughter attorneys, Gene Hackman and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, are not a team.

"Dances With Wolves" (A, PG-13, 180 minutes).

Kevin Costner's magnificent ode to brotherhood and brutality on America's western frontier during and after the Civil War.



the movies

Dan Greenberg

"Dice Rules" (F, NC-17, 87 minutes).

Offensive Andrew Dice Clay presentation lacks style, humor, taste or any other positive characteristic.

"Drop Dead Fred" (B+, PG-13, 100 minutes).

Even if you didn't have an imaginary childhood friend, you'll enjoy Rik Mayall in the title role.

"The Five Heartbeats" (A, R).

Good entertainment and excellent music in story of fictitious black singing group.

"FXX: The Deadly Art of Illusion" (C+, PG-13, 105 minutes).

Largely sterile exercise in special

effects teams two Brians — Denz

ney and Brown — one more time.

"GoodFellas" (B+, R, 145 minutes).

Martin Scorsese's intense, compelling saga of three mobsters returns after receiving half-dozen Oscar nominations. Despite good acting and fine technical values, the film is to be condemned for glorifying vicious and violent gangsters.

"Hudson Hawk" (A, PG-13, 97 minutes).

Bruce Willis is paroled thief who wants to go straight but events conspire.

"A Kiss Before Dying" (B+, R, 90 minutes).

Nerve-wracking, tense entertainment with Matt Dillon as psychopathic killer preying on wealthy family.

"Love Your Momma" (D, PG-13, 97 minutes).

Interesting independent film event falls flat in writing, directing and

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## ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

### 'Vanishing:' Thrills, chills

By John Monaghan  
special writer

Submitted for your approval: A young couple on the road to France stops at a gas station off the highway. She goes in for cold drinks and never returns. Was she abducted? Or has she just entered?

It's difficult not to think of Rod Serling when recounting the plot for "The Vanishing," a Dutch import playing this weekend at the Music Hall Center, puts in feature form the brand of chills and twists that shows like "The Twilight Zone" and "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" once deliv-

ered weekly.

The abandoned husband, Rex (Gene Bervoets), doesn't give up on his search. Three years later, he has borrowed money to mount a major media campaign including street corner posters and TV news interviews.

A new relationship with a patient, attractive photographer falls apart because of his obsession. After awhile, it's not so much being reunited with his wife as it is finding out exactly what happened to her.

WRITER/producer/director George Sluizer has a low-key style

that favors the unusual plot twists. There is a knockout aerial shot, however, when half-crazed Rex takes to the street and screams for the murderer to show himself.

The villain, by the way, is not your average drooling psychotic. Played by Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu, he's a milquetoast schoolteacher who leads a normal, if unemotional, life with his loving wife and two daughters.

Knowing who aided in the woman's disappearance is not what "The Vanishing" is all about. The question here is: Why did he do it and what

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## SCREEN SCENE

CITY WIDE CINEMA, Music Hall Center, Detroit. Call 746-3395 for information.

"The Vanishing" (Holland — 1986), 7 and 9:30 p.m. The Tele-Arts Theatre has closed, but Carl Allison is taking his shows on the road with this the first at the 1,800-seat Music Hall.

The opening film is an excellent one. This acclaimed Dutch thriller begins when a young couple stops at a service station and the woman mysteriously disappears. The husband's three-year search leads him to some shocking revelations. Opening benefit reception is Friday night.

DETROIT FILM SOCIETY, 5201 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For information, call 833-0408. (\$25 series membership; \$4 individual admission)

Double feature — "No Highway in the Sky" (USA — 1951) and "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" (USA — 1943) team at 7 p.m. June 7-8.

"Highway" is a suspenseful thriller about an airplane in trouble and stars James Stewart and Marlene Dietrich. "Rosie" is a Technicolor tribute to Betty Grable in a musical co-starring Adolphe Menjou and Robert Young. Concluding their current monthly series.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 13671 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information (free)

"Champion" (USA — 1949), 7 p.m. June 3. Kirk Douglas plays a boxer, who fights his way to the top at the expense of the people who truly believe in him.

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile and Middlebelt roads, Livonia. Call 476-1165 for information. (free)

"I'll Cry Tomorrow" (USA — 1955), 10 a.m. June 4. Susan Hay-

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## VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg  
special writer

As our culture continues to shift from print to video, more and more summer vacationers are stopping at video stores instead of at libraries to find something to do during summer's idle hours.

Paramount Pictures is playing right into that trend with its "Great American Writers Series," released Thursday. The package contains five re-packaged films from their catalog and six new releases, all priced at \$19.95.

These major motion pictures were based on work by some of the country's best-known writers. The six new-to-video titles include "Carrie"

(1952, no rating, black and white, 118 minutes) which was taken from Theodore Dreiser's "Sister Carrie" and stars Laurence Olivier and Jennifer Jones.

Two Tennessee Williams' works were the basis for "Summer and Smoke" (1962, no rating, color, 118 minutes) and "The Rose Tattoo" (1955, no rating, black and white, 116 minutes).

The former stars Laurence Har-

vey as well as Geraldine Page while the latter features Burt Lancaster and noted Italian film star Anna Magnani who won a best actress Oscar for this role.

ANOTHER FAMOUS Italian film actress, Sophia Loren, stars with Anthony Perkins in Eugene O'Neill's "Desire Under the Elms" (1958, no

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